

EMPOWERING THE
2SLGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY
IN HOME BUYING

DEI BEYOND THE WALLS

Bridging the gaps
for improved
inclusion policies

TRADE ROUTES

Opportunities abound
in the skilled trades

QBIZ CHAMPIONS

Meet the faces that help
make QBiz possible

NORTHERN PRIDE

CELEBRATIONS UNDERWAY
IN THE YUKON



Olga Vernev & Natasha Vernev
The Great Canadian Dog Cakes, BC



Angela Farkas & Alana Fiks
Black Market Provisions, MB

How these young 2SLGBTQIA+ entrepreneurs are making their dreams a reality

‘Without the involvement of Futurpreneur, we would not exist’

When the pandemic struck, Olga and Natasha Vernev knew they were in a vulnerable position.

As refugee newcomers from Russia, Olga says the couple “needed a strategy to protect our lives from being disrupted.”

Their homemade dog food recipes became the jumping-off point for their Vancouver business, The Great Canadian Dog Cakes — but they needed a little help getting started.

“When you arrive in another country to start a life from scratch, you essentially have no resources for a startup,” Olga says. “Without the involvement of Futurpreneur, we would not exist.”

Futurpreneur is Canada’s only national non-profit offering financing, mentorship, and resources to entrepreneurs 18-39 — including a growing number of 2SLGBTQIA+ business owners.

From dreaming to thriving

In Winnipeg, partners in life and business Angela Farkas and Alana Fiks had long dreamed of launching a business together; now, they run Winnipeg’s Black Market Provisions, a shop dedicated to food and gifts from other great small businesses.

“Futurpreneur’s funding was not only valuable in terms of us needing the dollars — it also wasn’t terrifying to new entrepreneurs!” Alana says. “Working with lenders can be intimidating, but Futurpreneur really wants you to succeed and thrive.”

The guidance from the organization’s staff, as well as the business mentor assigned through the program, also proved invaluable: “Futurpreneur worked with us to ensure our business plan was sound, provided guidance, and ultimately confirmed our belief that we were onto something.”

Supporting rainbow business owners across Canada



Shawn Raymond - Shawn R Training - AB



Paulo Trindade - Paulo's Cake Shop - ON



Steph McNair - Maneland Hair - NS



To hear success stories from more queer entrepreneurs, or to learn more about Futurpreneur’s financing and mentorship, visit futurpreneur.ca/qbiz.

futurpreneur



QUEERTECH

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CONTENTS

04



NORTHERN PRIDE 04

Celebrations underway in three Yukon cities

By Anna-Liza Badaloo

YUKON TERRITORY 08

2SLGBTQIA+-owned businesses
thrive in "the land of the midnight sun"

By James Peters

QT CONFERENCE 2023 12

What to know and how to participate

By QueerTech

THE QT PODCAST 13

Uplifting 2SLGBTQIA+ voices in tech

By QueerTech

QBIZ CHAMPIONS 14

Meet the faces that help make QBiz possible

By Justyne Essery

A FUSION OF EXPERIENCES 20

How Taylor Russett transformed a local café
into a symbol of community connection

By Bryan Hansen

20 YEARS STRONG 23

CGLCC celebrates two decades of championing
a more inclusive Canadian economy for
the 2SLGBTQI+ community

By Amber Phalen, CGLCC

BIKES AND BITES 24

Exploring the Drumheller Valley by e-bike!

EMPOWERING THE 2SLGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY IN HOME BUYING 26

Insights from Chelsy Pommer, realtor and advocate

By Bryan Hansen

TRADE ROUTES 28

Opportunities abound in the skilled trades
for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community

By James Peters

DEI BEYOND THE WALLS 30

Bridging the gaps for improved inclusion policies

By Luis Augusto Nobre,

Pride at Work Canada/Fierté au travail Canada

OVERCOMING BARRIERS 32

Federal government selects CGLCC to administer
funds for Canada's first-ever 2SLGBTQI+
Entrepreneurship Program

By Amber Phalen, CGLCC

THE BOTTOM LINE 33

Past to the Future

By André Morriseau

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES DIRECTORY 34

NORTHERN PRIDE

By Anna-Liza Badaloo

Celebrations underway in three Yukon cities



Father and daughter Thomas and Ts'ëla from the Pride Your Ride event in Dawson City.

While Canadian Pride festival goes often gravitate towards Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal, Pride celebrations are also heating up in the nation's northern regions as the Yukon Pride Festival celebrates its 10th anniversary this year. With high proportions of youth, First Nations, trans and nonbinary people in the region, the Yukon Pride Festival aims to create safe, affirming spaces and supportive communities, where people of all ages can feel a sense of acceptance and belonging.

WHAT'S ON TAP?

Selene Vakharia, Producer of Yukon Pride Festival with the Queer Yukon Society, has seen the festival grow and thrive over the last decade. This year, the festival took place in three locations, providing plenty of queer celebration opportunities for Yukon residents and visitors alike.

"This year's Pride festivals feature an amazing mix of local and visiting talent," says Vakharia. "We have a great mix of events for various ages, including youth-only events."

This year, organizers plan to bring back popular Pride classics such as

parades and free community picnics. "There's sometimes a dance party, but it hasn't been consistent. We felt that was something that our community needed and wanted, so we're really excited to do that," Vakharia says. "We're having a drag brunch this year for the first time, and the focus on youth events is also quite new."

DAWSON CITY PRIDE FESTIVAL

Dawson City kicked off the first festival this year from July 27 to 30. Highlights included:

- Teens-Only Bike-Decorating Hang Out
- Pride Parade and Community Picnic
- All-Ages Costume Making
- Drag Me to the Dancefloor

As Dawson City is smaller than Whitehorse, Vakharia has found a close-knit community with strong allyship. "Dawson has a wonderful arts-centric population. As a town, they come out to support one another and have fun. It's a party with a purpose!" Vakharia exclaims. "That fun aspect is what makes Pride so powerful. It encourages people to connect, educate themselves and come out in support in a way that might not happen during the rest of the year."

WHITEHORSE PRIDE FESTIVAL

The next stop was the Whitehorse Pride Festival, which ran from August 5 to 13. Highlights included:

- Drag Brunch featuring Ilona Verley, Indigenous and Two-Spirit *Canada's Drag Race* contestant, and Indigi-Hauz of Beaver Hills, an all-Indigenous queer drag performance troupe based out of Edmonton
- Performance from Mo Kenney, a singer-songwriter from Nova Scotia
- Teens-only Movie Night and Art Activism Workshop
- Pride Parade and Pancake Picnic
- Gaylight All Night Drag Show and Dance Party

At the largest of the three festivals, Whitehorse attendees can usually look forward to many performers from outside of the territory. And, to support youth advocacy in the region, event organizers also held a special workshop. "Young people here led the charge to ban conversion therapy," Vakharia explains. "They're invested in their own community, not only locally but in a broader, global sense. We wanted to support them by offering an activism workshop."



Whitehorse Pride. Photo Credit: Andrew Strain.



Whitehorse Pride. Photo Credit: Andrew Strain.



WATSON LAKE PRIDE FESTIVAL

The last stop was Watson Lake Pride on August 26. Although Watson Lake is a small town like Dawson City, the situation is quite different. “There isn’t necessarily the same feeling of acceptance and safety there for our queer and trans community as there is in Dawson,” says Vakharia. “Our Queer Yukon Officer there does so much to create that sense of community and connection. We’re growing that.”

One exciting development towards fostering greater 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion

in the entire Yukon region is their participation in the Discovery Day parade in August. “This is a great way to get people together and have allies be a part of our floats and the Discovery Day parade,” says Vakharia. “We want to show people that they are accepted, they do belong, and that they are safe in a way that is part of an existing event.”

YOUTH FOCUS

The festivals have prioritized youth this year for good reason. 2SLGBTQIA+ youth

are more than four times as likely as their peers to attempt suicide. 2SLGBTQIA+ youth who live in a community that is accepting of 2SLGBTQIA+ people report much lower rates of attempted suicide than those who do not. “A lot of our youth are First Nations, so there are additional risk factors in community acceptance,” says Vakharia. “Within the queer and trans community, it’s harder for people of colour to feel belonging, as well as with their own traditional communities. We felt it was important to have very strong



THE HISTORY OF PRIDE IN THE YUKON

The Queer Yukon Society was first established in 2011 and held its first Pride event in 2013. "It was a very interesting and excellent five years of progressiveness, of community leaders in the queer and trans community standing up and taking the lead in their advocacy for all of us," Vakharia says. "What they achieved in those first few years was not only having the first Pride event ever, but also getting the City of Whitehorse to adopt mandated workplace [2SLGBTQIA+ sensitivity] training."

More recently, Yukon students led the charge and lobbied the Yukon government to ban conversion therapy. Now, Vakharia says that the territory has the second-highest proportion of transgender and nonbinary people across Canada, as well as some of the most inclusive policies for gender-affirming health care.

"Things happen quickly," Vakharia adds. "For so long, it was a few people here and there doing so much of this work. But it was really thanks to – as I think it always is – a couple people who are really fed up and are just ready and wanting to make change, and they make it happen."

performer representation to show that visibility and to inspire people to come together around that."

As a queer South Asian person, Vakharia understands the struggles of intersectionality firsthand. "We're often forced to focus on one of those identities to feel a sense of community and belonging. But you may feel like you don't belong, people don't get your cultural references or they don't fully see and understand you," says Vakharia. "It's

so valuable to have a space where you can be all your identities at once and have complete belonging based on that."

Given the rising tide of anti-queer and trans hate and violence across the globe – and given that the Yukon has the second-highest proportion of transgender and nonbinary people across Canada – Vakharia sees an opportunity for the festivals to provide more queer visibility. "Everything that's happening right now only highlights the importance of these

events. If people don't see you, it's easy to forget about you," Vakharia notes. "That visibility is more important than ever, as well as being visible for those in our queer community who can't right now for safety reasons. Pride offers youth opportunities to build community and see queer and trans adults thriving. This is an essential protective factor to help decrease their suicide risk, which is incredibly important for what we're doing right now." ■

Yukon Territory

2SLGBTQIA+-owned businesses thrive in “the land of the midnight sun”

By James Peters

Opening a business anywhere is usually fraught with red tape, roadblocks and reliable uncertainties, and entrepreneurs from the 2SLGBTQIA+ community are far from exempt. *QBiz* reached out to three business owners from the Yukon – Yukon Spaces from Dawson City, and Polarity Brewing and Crêperie La Petite Maison from Whitehorse – to discuss their challenges, experiences and advice for fellow entrepreneurs.

ÉMILIE MORIN AND EDWINE VENIAT CRÊPERIE LA PETITE MAISON

Émilie Morin and Edwine Veniat are the co-owners and managers of Crêperie La Petite Maison in Whitehorse, a French restaurant located on the traditional territories of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

“We’ve always had a passion for food, and the idea of opening our restaurant was

born from a deeply rooted desire to create a safe and inclusive space where everyone can come together to enjoy unique food, an authentic atmosphere and each other’s company,” Veniat says. “We wanted to establish a place that celebrates diversity and fosters a sense of belonging within the community.”

“Our proudest accomplishments include creating an environment where customers from all walks of life feel welcome and accepted,” she adds. “Being



a platform for fostering understanding and unity among diverse individuals is a testament to our mission's success. We are also extremely proud to be sharing our culinary heritage with the amazing folks of the Yukon."

A harmonious partnership, the two owners share a mutual vision for the restaurant. "We're dedicated to expanding our impact by collaborating with local organizations supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ causes," Veniat says. "We envision our restaurant becoming a hub for hosting events, workshops and discussions that promote education, awareness and advocacy. By doing so, we hope to contribute positively to our community and society."

"For us, the idea that food has the power to bring people together and transcend barriers inspired us to embark on this journey," she concludes. "So be authentic to your vision and values. Embrace challenges as opportunities for growth, and surround

yourself with a supportive network of mentors, friends and partners. In the spirit of Pride, remember that diversity is an asset – it fuels innovation and broadens perspectives."

KAI MILLER **POLARITY BREWING**

Kai Miller and his older brother Eric first started the planning and development for their craft beer business in 2017. Polarity

Brewing opened at the height of the pandemic in early 2020, so they know a thing or two about small business stress.

"Real estate is a very limited resource in Whitehorse, but we were willing to fit our business project to the space, not the other way around," Miller says. "There was an existing building that met our requirements nicely and appeared to be a decent location for foot traffic, so we took the plunge."



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The location in question is right on the Yukon River waterfront, complete with a large patio, floor-to-ceiling windows and a kitchen they share with the award-winning Wayfarer Oyster House restaurant.

“The name Polarity Brewing was chosen for a few reasons,” Miller explains. “Because we didn’t want the usual Yukon clichés, we chose a snappy name that kind of invokes the north, with a science vibe to it. We’re an all-electric operation, and we also thought of brewing as a product of science and nature – hence, polarity.”

Miller reports that he didn’t have many business challenges linked to his identity, allowing him and his brother to focus their energies on the business. “At Polarity Brewing, the atmosphere is casual with quality – fine dining and craft beer. So we’re pretty full as a result, without the

added cost and the headache of running a restaurant; we can really focus on just making beer.”

Like every small business, there were many challenges at start up, which were only amplified by the pandemic. “The biggest thing I’ve learned is recognizing your own limitations,” Miller shares. “You really need to know your own strengths and weaknesses. For example, running a restaurant was just having too many balls in the air, and I wasn’t able to stay on top of that. So find your passion and streamline the business to fit you, rather than the other way around.”

LEE MANNING **YUKON SPACES**

As its website suggests, “affordable inspiration” is the mantra for Yukon

Spaces, a business group started by Lee Manning and his partner only a few years ago. Under the Yukon Spaces banner are the Dawson Lodge, designed for rest and relaxation, and the Yukon Spa, designed for repair and restoration. The company got its start when Manning and his partner made an “exit out of Brexit” from the United Kingdom in 2018 – a global move that further complicated the typical challenges of starting a business.

“We had to essentially start over,” he explains. “We had no entrepreneurial history in Canada and no credit rating, which all settles into place after a couple of years. But in terms of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, we found Canada very welcoming.”

Manning explains the source of their affordable inspiration philosophy:





“Originally, we looked for what we felt the community in Dawson City really needed, so we created the Dawson Lodge for short-term accommodations and the Yukon Spa for health and well-being. At the spa, we also looked for ways to integrate traditional western health care with treatments and experiences that would enhance well-being in a truly holistic way.”

The spa consists of an outdoor swim spa, outdoor hot tub, outdoor sauna, indoor steam room and indoor sauna, café restaurant, and specialized treatments such as chiropractic, acupuncture, massage therapy, laser therapy, skin treatments and foot and hand care.

“Not much free time on my hands, but I like to fill my life with stuff that I enjoy doing – things that look like work but don’t feel like work most of the time,” says Manning, whose previous career highlights include a stint as an accountant, a police officer and training as a commercial pilot.

And his approach to business? “Yukon Spaces took a slightly different approach to the traditional structure of most companies,” Manning explains. “We’re employee-owned, so everybody involved is also a shareholder. It’s a lot easier to run a business as a collective because everybody understands they contribute to both the profits and the losses, so they’re much more invested in the outcome.”

“Our proudest accomplishment is in knowing that our productivity is very strong, which only speaks to our structure and our culture,” he adds. “We just don’t follow the status quo.” ■

Because your True ID is cause for pride.

Gowling WLG values the “something different” that we all bring to the table, and believes that everyone deserves to be legally recognized as their whole and true self.

As part of our continued support of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, we’ve partnered with the Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity to make the gender marker and name change process more holistic, accessible and affordable for transgender and gender diverse individuals across Canada.

Learn more at gowlingwlg.com/trueid



GOWLING WLG

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By QueerTech

Are you looking for your next job opportunity in tech? Perhaps you would like to connect with other 2SLGBTQIA+ tech enthusiasts and learn about the latest cutting-edge technologies and innovations. If any of this applies to you, then come join us at QueerTech's second-annual QueerTech Conference (QTQ) 2023!

WHAT IS THE QT QONFERENCE?

QTQ is an annual tech conference organized by QueerTech, a non-profit organization committed to promoting 2SLGBTQIA+ rights, inclusion and representation in the tech industry. QTQ is a two-day multi-sensory, interactive and immersive experience. The event brings the queer community and allies together to celebrate 2SLGBTQIA+ contributions to technology. Participants can network, learn new skills from tech experts, hear from 2SLGBTQIA+ entrepreneurs and explore ways to make the tech industry more inclusive!

The 2023 QTQ is taking place November 1-2, 2023, both virtually and in person at Cirque Éloize and Hyatt Centric Ville-Marie Montreal.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM QTQ 2023

QTQ showcases the invaluable impact that queer folks have on technological innovation. Spanning fields such as artificial intelligence, software development, cybersecurity and many

more, there truly is something for everyone at QTQ!

1. Real Stories, Real Trailblazers:

Attend inspirational keynotes, expert-led panels and more. Hear from 2SLGBTQIA+ tech pioneers who've defied conventions, overcome barriers and emerged as trailblazers in their respective fields.

2. Meaningful Conversations:

Mingle with other QTs at peer groups and interactive panels. Meet folks who share your passion for innovation and fostering an environment where diversity can thrive.

3. Skills that Elevate:

Join technical talks and hands-on workshops led by tech experts who are passionate about imparting practical skills. These sessions are designed to nurture your talents and empower you with tools for success.

4. A Safe Space to Connect:

Whether you're an introvert or extrovert, QueerTech curates a warm, fun, welcoming environment with intention! Build meaningful connections and forge collaborations that'll help propel your career journey forward.

5. Inspiration and Innovation:

Witness 2SLGBTQIA+ entrepreneurs and startups take centre stage as they showcase their ground-breaking projects. Experience the vibrancy and creativity that arises when diversity fuels innovation.

6. A Platform for Diversity:

QueerTech doesn't shy away from the complexity of identities in our community. We amplify the voices of those who have historically been marginalized, creating an inclusive platform for everyone.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN QTQ

Secure your spot at QTQ 2023! Visit site. phedloop.com/event/QTQ2023/home for tickets and registration. Use code QBIZQT to access specially priced tickets at 50-per-cent off!

Follow us on social media @queertechhq and keep an eye on the official QT Conference 2023 website page for updates at queertech.org/page/qt-conference.

Visiting from out of town? Don't forget to book accommodations! Book online at hyatt.com/en-US/group-booking/YULCT/G-QUEE to receive special discounted rates at Hyatt Centric Montreal.

Join us at QT Conference 2023 and be a part of this transformative event that celebrates diversity, fosters innovation and builds a more inclusive tech industry for everyone. Don't miss out on this once-a-year opportunity to connect, learn and be inspired. Register now and help us queer the tech industry together. See you there! ■

Want to stay up to date with QueerTech news, events and content? Join our digital community today at queertech.org!

THE QT PODCAST

Uplifting 2SLGBTQIA+ voices in tech *By QueerTech*

The QT Podcast is more than just a series of conversations; it's a celebration of 2SLGBTQIA+ resilience, empowerment and progress in tech. By highlighting the voices and experiences of queer leaders, we aim to foster a more inclusive and supportive tech landscape, where diversity is celebrated and mentorship made more accessible.

You can listen to *The QT Podcast* on YouTube, Spotify and Apple Podcasts.

If you're a 2SLGBTQIA+ professional working in tech, you're well aware of how the industry is lacking in diverse representation. Consequently, it can be difficult to find mentorship or advice from those whose lived and professional experiences relate to your own. Whether you're looking for career advice or simply want to feel validated in your experiences, consider tuning in to *The QT Podcast*!

Hosted by Margi Marchetti (they/them), *The QT Podcast* offers an inclusive platform for 2SLGBTQIA+ professionals and entrepreneurs to share their stories, experiences, challenges and triumphs. Hear from our trailblazing guests and get inspired by the transformative impact they're making within the tech ecosystem.

This season of *The QT Podcast* features:

**ZHANÉ STIMPSON (THEY/SHE),
YOUTH ENGAGEMENT ASSOCIATE
AT WEALTHSIMPLE**

Zhané Stimpson discusses the importance of fostering an open and diverse tech community, with a focus on providing space for youth, women and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals. Her main goal is to share the beauty of tech and coding through youth-driven initiatives and community-building events. Delve into topics like queer leadership, mentorship, transitioning tech passions into careers and the significance of giving back.

**SACHA FORT (THEY/THEM),
PRODUCT MANAGER
AT LIGHTHOUSE LABS**

In this episode, Sacha shares their journey of self-discovery, coming out as nonbinary and their career path. The conversation focuses on opening up to loved ones, finding a supportive community and the transformative power of authenticity.

**CLARIS CYARRON (SHE/HER),
CREATIVE DIRECTOR AND
CO-FOUNDER OF SILVERSTRING MEDIA**

This episode explores topics such as queer identity, transitioning, architecture and video game design. Claris shares challenges she's faced as a trans person in the gaming industry and emphasizes the importance of representation and queer dynamics in storytelling. The conversation offers

intriguing insights into game development's potential to shape our worldview.

**GREGORY JOHN – AWOHKOTSINAA
(HE/HIM),
LEAD EXECUTIVE AT
UNIMAIZE TECHNOLOGIES**

Gregory John – awohkotsinaa shares his journey of self-actualization while growing up as both gay and Métis in Alberta. He talks about his journey navigating through various industries, eventually leading him to establish his own tech company, Unimaize Technologies.

**DR. DEVAN KRONISCH
(THEY/THEM), COACH**

In this discussion, Dr. Devan Kronisch provides insights into navigating challenges and opportunities in the tech industry. The conversation focuses on the transformative impact of effective communication, coaching, and diversity and inclusion initiatives within organizations.

**NASOUH AL TARK (HE/HIM),
FRONT-END DEVELOPER AT PLANK**

Nasouh Al Tark shares his journey from Syria to Canada as a refugee. He recounts his experiences as a queer individual in the tech industry, highlighting both challenges and triumphs. ■

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QBIZ CHAMPIONS

Meet the faces that help make *QBiz* possible

By Justyne Essery

For the last two years, *QBiz* has been bringing you resources and celebrating the success stories of the 2SLGBTQIA+ business community. But beyond the pages lie a multitude of partnerships – many of which have been around since day one – that not only make our work possible, but elevate our reach and further our goal to unite business owners and professionals from all corners of the country.

We sat down to chat with some of our biggest supporters and showcase their work in the 2SLGBTQIA+ business community – and look back at some of *QBiz*'s highlights so far!

Answers have been edited for length and clarity.

SCOTT CAMERON **RAINBOWCONNECT.CA**

What is your role, and how do you serve the 2SLGBTQIA+ community?

I am the founder of RainbowConnect; if anything happens in the company, it's me. I've got a long history and career in community development, and when I came out it just seemed there was no coordinated space to learn about the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. So I just thought, if it doesn't exist, why don't we create it? I think people are responding to the whole notion of being able to identify 2SLGBTQIA+-safe, friendly and welcoming spaces, and being able to

support those businesses and community organizations that want to support our community.

What are some past projects or accomplishments you're most proud of?

Early on, I came to meet Riyaz Sharan. Riyaz is someone I turned to when I needed a new look for RainbowConnect, and he helped design the current rainbow with the little dots and the story behind it. Riyaz was recently asked to design a bus wrap for the City of Leduc, and apparently the City found him through RainbowConnect. That is exactly what I had hoped RainbowConnect could do. It's the value of that network – when I find

good people who do good work, I try to connect them to other people of a similar mindset. Wouldn't it be awesome if that's what we had within our 2SLGBTQIA+ community here in Canada? A group of business people and community organizations that look out for each other and help connect one another to opportunities.

What ongoing projects are you most excited about?

I've given lots of thought to how RainbowConnect can help give back, and I certainly have some new ideas about the way we can help support the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. My initial thoughts of RainbowConnect and its social purpose were probably a little too complicated, so I'm really trying to keep it simple so it works better. I'm hoping that, over the next several months, I'll have the opportunity to pull it together, get the right partners together, and [my hope is that] we'll have something to launch in the new year.

Why did RainbowConnect choose to partner with QBiz?

Relationship. Maurice [LaBorde, QBiz publisher] was one of the first people to reach out to me, and he loved what we were doing. He was looking for opportunities to get information [out] about cool things happening in the west, in the prairie provinces, so I think that was part of the rationale for reaching out. In the process, I realized that he's a great guy and we think alike. Partnering with QBiz seemed like a no-brainer because I

This partnership represents a strategic move that maximizes our collective impact and empowers us to create a more inclusive and thriving environment for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community within the tech industry and beyond.



- NAOUFEL TESTAOUNI

**NAOUFEL TESTAOUNI
QUEERTECH**

What is your role, and how do you serve the 2SLGBTQIA+ community?

I'm the co-founder and CEO at QueerTech. QueerTech has a corporate membership model for tech companies to join us. Our corporate membership is based on four pillars: inclusivity, helpfulness, pride and accessibility.

What are some past projects or accomplishments you're most proud of?

There are so many accomplishments I am proud of:

- Grew our membership to 9,464 QTs;
- Reached over 1,088 event registrations (Qareers Virtual Fair, QT Connect Toronto);
- Launched the QT Access Program and hit our goal of graduating 25 QTs;
- Experienced tremendous growth, expanding from two full-time employees to a dedicated team of five full-time professionals;
- Launched the QueerTech Digital Community with over 600 users;
- Launched six episodes of the first season of *The QT Podcast*; and
- We hosted QT Conference 2022 with 500 QTs from across Canada.

What ongoing projects are you most excited about?

The QT Conference – we bring our community together to build their professional network and access professional development, employment and business opportunities.

Partnering with QBiz seemed like a no-brainer because I felt I could trust the partnership moving forward. I didn't feel like I was entering into something that felt scary.

felt I could trust the partnership moving forward. I didn't feel like I was entering into something that felt scary, so I am really excited about where we can take this together.

What is your favourite article or issue of QBiz so far?

You know, I think it was the first [issue] that we were involved in. For me to see RainbowConnect in print was kind of this [moment of], "Oh, that is really cool. This is happening." To some extent, it signalled a higher level of accountability that I need to keep going with it, because it's in print. We had hired a writer to write the first couple of stories that we submitted [for the magazine], which felt like a bit of a milestone for me because it really was putting, as a company, our best foot forward.



- SCOTT CAMERON

Katie Dudtschak, former Executive Vice President, Personal and Commercial Banking at RBC, was featured on the cover of *QBiz* in May 2022.



Why did QueerTech choose to partner with *QBiz*?

QueerTech chose to partner with *QBiz* due to a strategic alignment of values and goals. *QBiz*'s mission and objectives resonate deeply with those of QueerTech, creating a synergy that promises impactful outcomes. This partnership represents a strategic move that maximizes our collective impact and empowers us to create a more inclusive and thriving environment for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community within the tech industry and beyond.

What has been your favourite article or issue of *QBiz* so far?

I love every issue that has come out, and I love reading the stories of our community.

**JADE PICHETTE
PRIDE AT WORK CANADA/FIERTÉ
AU TRAVAIL CANADA**

What is your role, and how do you serve the 2SLGBTQIA+ community?

I am the Director of Programs at Pride at Work, which means I oversee all the content we put out as an organization and make sure that we are acting as DEI leaders in our thought leadership. Pride at Work Canada works as a member-services non-profit organization, so as a result, we work with over 250 different employers throughout Canada who access our programs. These include deeper discussions through education like our webinar program or panel events, dialogue such as our networking events, and thought leadership through our

research and consulting support. We look to promote active change within employers in Canada and provide opportunities for 2SLGBTQIA+ business leaders to connect with one another.

What are some past projects or accomplishments you're most proud of?

Pride at Work's research projects stand out to me as something I am especially proud of. Since 2020, we have been part of three different research projects: *Transitioning Employers: A survey of policies and practices for trans-inclusive workplaces*; *Building the evidence base about economic, health and social inequities faced by LGBTQ2S-Plus individuals in Canada*; and *Lead with Pride: Best Practices for Advancing 2SLGBTQIA+ Leadership*. These projects looked at how inclusive employers actually are of trans communities, the economic disparities for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities and the barriers to leadership for 2SLGBTQIA+ people. All of these projects served the needs of the 2SLGBTQIA+ business community in ways that otherwise our communities would fall through the cracks.

What ongoing projects are you most excited about?

I am extremely excited about our THRIVE program for Two-Spirit, queer and trans leaders that happens every winter from February to April. The program brings together 2SLGBTQIA+ leaders and provides education about how they can develop their leadership styles and skills. This coming year will be our fourth cohort due to the program's success.

Our Workplace Audit program also comes to mind, which includes an evaluation of every section of an employer and gives targeted advice about how to make their workplace more inclusive to 2SLGBTQIA+ employees and job seekers. It provides that next level of feedback that organizations need to develop their 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion strategy. This program is also available to non-partners, allowing everyone to see where they are on their DEI journey.

Why did Pride at Work choose to partner with *QBiz*?

Pride at Work is committed to building a Canada where everyone can see themselves at work regardless of gender

***QBiz* is providing a space for those of us who are 2SLGBTQIA+ to discuss the issues specific to our communities in the business space. Although there are other queer media sources, *QBiz* is the only one that provides that business connection.**



- JADE PICHETTE

expression, gender identity and sexual orientation. QBiz is providing a space for those of us who are 2SLGBTQIA+ to discuss the issues specific to our communities in the business space. Although there are other queer media sources, QBiz is the only one that provides that business connection.

What is your favourite article or issue of QBiz so far?

The [spring 2022] cover article “The Power of Vulnerability” was one that hit me. As more people transition at work, it is still very difficult for people to feel safe to disclose their gender identity. Katie Dudtschak’s quote at the end of the article really struck me: “As a senior leader, I have to be credible. Vulnerability was key to being as authentic and credible as possible. Because I showed vulnerability, other people showed care and compassion back to me.” Though this is very much not the experience of everyone who transitions at work, it struck me as to the power of vulnerability in leadership and the impact that has for others.

CONNOR MCKIGGAN
CGLCC

What is your role, and how do you serve the 2SLGBTQIA+ community?

I am the Business Development Manager for our Tourism and Accreditation programs at CGLCC. At Rainbow Registered, we accredit businesses across Canada as 2SLGBTQIA+-friendly and inclusive spaces. Our team works with registered businesses to ensure their policies and practices, internal leadership, engagement with the community and training all meet national standards. The program really is a fabulous way to ensure your practices match up with your business values and ensure customers and employees feel confident in your business space.

What are some past projects or accomplishments you’re most proud of?

When I first started at the CGLCC, we had 50 businesses accredited through our Rainbow Registered program across Canada. One year later, over 300 businesses are part of our network of accredited safe spaces. I am particularly proud to see so many businesses in

“ **Through connections with 2SLGBTQIA+ groups nationwide, we appreciate the opportunity to join forces to deliver these motivating stories from across the country.** ”



- CONNOR MCKIGGAN

Atlantic Canada sign on to the program to ensure folks in their communities know they are safe and welcomed.

What ongoing projects are you most excited about?

We are celebrating our 20th anniversary of the CGLCC this year, which is momentous. The party will really kick off at our upcoming GALA in November! I look forward to once again seeing some of our [Rainbow] Registered businesses there, many of whom will be donating items to the silent auction. A Holiday Gift Guide for the winter is also being considered as a way to feature some of our amazing Rainbow Registered businesses.

Why did CGLCC choose to partner with QBiz?

We collaborate with QBiz to help champion 2SLGBTQIA+ businesses and share insights from 2SLGBTQIA+ business owners. As a nationwide publication, QBiz focuses on showcasing Canadian stories. Whether you’re a business owner, aspiring

entrepreneur or starting your career, the content resonates with everyone. Untold success stories, when unearthed, inspire and unite us. Through connections with 2SLGBTQIA+ groups nationwide, we appreciate the opportunity to join forces to deliver these motivating stories from across the country.

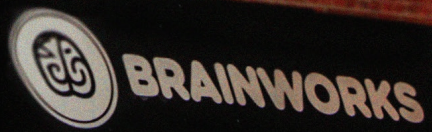
What has been your favourite article or issue of QBiz so far?

I particularly liked the issue with Kendall Gender – she’s such an inspiration to so many in the community! It’s important to highlight people working in the queer community as business leaders. Drag spaces can be so creative and welcoming, celebrating queer art, culture and protest. I thought the key points Kendall makes about being genuinely oneself were particularly poignant. Highlighting queer business leaders like Kendall who are unapologetically themselves shows us just how successful we can be when we celebrate who we are. ■



Out’n About Travel team Linda R. Burndorfer and Lynne Rubidoux Burndorfer were featured on the cover of QBiz’s debut issue in August 2021.

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COMMITTED, BADASS BRAINWORKERS
FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE. WE **CELEBRATE**
THE UNIQUE THREADS OF EACH
INDIVIDUAL THAT WEAVE TOGETHER OUR FABRIC
OF IDEAS AND PERSPECTIVES. WE ARE CREATORS OF WORLDS WHERE
IDEAS COLLIDE AND SPARKS ILLUMINATE HOW
OUR DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES, CULTURES,
SEXUAL PREFERENCES AND GENDER IDENTITIES COME TOGETHER AND FORM
A VERY UNIQUE LENS **DISCOVER**
THROUGH WHICH WE
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A FUSION OF EXPERIENCES

How Taylor Russett transformed a local café into a symbol of community connection

By Bryan Hansen



Meet Taylor Russett, the dynamic entrepreneur behind The Grind and Vine, a charming wine and coffee shop nestled in the heart of his hometown of Trenton, Ont. In the world of tourism, Russett's contributions have earned him notable recognition, including the prestigious Tourism Industry Association of Canada's (TIAC's) 30 Under 30 Achiever Award in 2022 – a testament to his remarkable impact on the industry. Not stopping there, Russett's entrepreneurial prowess also secured him the New Business of the

Year accolade at the esteemed Quinte Business Achievement Awards in the same year.

Educated with a Master of Management, Innovation & Entrepreneurship from the Smith School of Business at Queen's University, Russett's academic background laid the groundwork for his journey into the business world. An audacious and visionary spirit, he has cultivated ownership of three successful ventures: The Grind and Vine, Russett Photography and Snappy Photobooth Company. His

diverse portfolio showcases his ability to excel in various domains and embrace the challenges that come with entrepreneurship.

Russett's journey with The Grind and Vine began during the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic. Armed with a degree in public affairs and policy management as well as communications from Carleton University, he returned to his hometown seeking a career path in the midst of a pandemic-induced economic downturn. Drawing from his previous entrepreneurial success with a thriving



wedding photography company, Russett set his sights on transforming the local Grind Café, which was on the verge of closing after a decade of operation, into a new venture that would fuse together coffee, wine and a deep sense of social good.

Reflecting on the pivotal moment that sparked the idea for The Grind

and Vine, Russett explains, “I’ve never had an ambition in food. I’ve never had an ambition in wine. But I have such a drive and passion for talking to people and having positive social interactions, and that is what the café meant for me.” This strong sense of purpose and vision fueled Russett’s determination to curate a unique space where people could come

together, fostering a much-needed sense of community during a time of isolation.

Over the past three years, Russett’s venture has evolved from a mom-and-pop café into a hybrid coffee wine bar with a strong focus on tourism. This fusion of experiences allows Russett to engage with his customers at different points in their day, creating a loyal and



Florence Carlyle, *My Studio Corner* (detail), c. 1921.

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diverse clientele. However, this transformation also came with challenges, especially in a small town where change can be met with resistance. Russett aimed to honour the café's past while modernizing its offerings and elevating the customer experience with new roasters and products.

With a background in politics, Russett brings a unique perspective to his entrepreneurial endeavours. He understands the importance of understanding purchasing patterns and effective communication to enhance customer experiences. This insight extends beyond The Grind and Vine, influencing how he plans events and product launches. One such example is the Puppies and Pinot night, catering to customers who want to include their beloved pets in the café experience.

At the heart of The Grind and Vine lies a powerful narrative of acceptance and diversity. As a 2SLGBTQIA+ advocate, Russett understands the significance of representation and visibility. Through his café, he has taken strides in promoting 2SLGBTQIA+ tourism events, allowing the community to thrive and flourish in Quinte West. Russett's welcoming approach and dedication to diversity have made The Grind and Vine not just a coffee shop or wine bar, but a space where everyone feels valued and embraced.

"Before, [the 2SLGBTQIA+ community] was not talked about," Russett explains. "It was shut down during City Council meetings. We didn't fly the Pride flag here. There was no Pride representation."

Through his café's visibility and activism, Russett has championed 2SLGBTQIA+ events, fostering acceptance and understanding among the community. His dedication to advocacy and community building extends beyond his business ventures – he actively engages with City Council and fellow business owners, promoting meaningful discussions and collaboration, even when personal opinions may differ. His respectful approach and collaborative mindset have earned him a strong and supportive relationship with the mayor of Quinte West, who recognizes the significance of embracing diversity and inclusivity within the community.

As a mentor to young entrepreneurs, Russett shares valuable advice: "Look small to develop big." He emphasizes the importance of identifying areas with small barriers to entry that offer high growth potential. His success in revitalizing a hometown café into a thriving hybrid café and wine bar stands as a testament to the impact of localized entrepreneurship.

When asked about his future in politics, Russett humorously declares, "I get asked that question daily, whether I'm going to run for City Council. I retired from politics in my prime." While he may have left the political arena, his influence in the business world and commitment to overall social well-being continue to shine through The Grind and Vine and beyond.

In Russett, we find an inspiring example of how a visionary 2SLGBTQIA+ entrepreneur can transform a simple café into a symbol of community connection and acceptance, all the while contributing significantly to the tourism industry. As he continues to enrich his community, Russett exemplifies the positive change that an individual can bring through entrepreneurship and advocacy. ■

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20 Years Strong

CGLCC celebrates two decades of championing a more inclusive Canadian economy for the 2SLGBTQI+ community

By Amber Phalen, Manager, Marketing & Communications, CGLCC



This year marks the 20th anniversary of Canada's 2SLGBTQI+ Chamber of Commerce (CGLCC), a national not-for-profit organization developed for and dedicated to the support and sustainability of 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurship.

Founded in the summer of 2003 by Darrell Schuurman and R. Bruce McDonald, the CGLCC was created in response to a growing 2SLGBTQI+ movement by regional Chambers of Commerce across Canada, as well as a need to connect and grow their access to business opportunities and support at a national level.

"We started by building important government and corporate connections like Air Canada and municipalities like the City of Toronto," says Schuurman, who took over as CEO in 2017. "They remain strong supporters today. We have successfully raised the profile of 2SLGBTQI+ businesses."

A study conducted in 2021, in partnership with Deloitte, found that there are more than 100,000 2SLGBTQI+-owned businesses in Canada, generating an estimated \$22 billion in economic activity. Yet the 2SLGBTQI+ community continues to face an uphill battle as the lived experiences of individual business owners is doubted or silenced.

"There's a perception that Canada is inclusive and that an organization like the CGLCC is, and was, not needed," explains Schuurman. "It took a long time and many conversations for corporations and others to really see and understand our collective, community-based experience."

The CGLCC has developed a number of programs throughout its 20 years, offering support and training in response to the ongoing needs of the 2SLGBTQI+ business community. Its Supplier Diversity program was launched during WorldPride 2014 in Toronto, making the CGLCC the certifying body for 2SLGBTQI+-owned businesses in Canada.

The Global Program and OUT for Business Youth Entrepreneurship initiative were both launched in 2017 and provide access and support to 2SLGBTQI+ businesses at critical points in their journey, from formation to scale-up and possible international expansion. The Rainbow Registered accreditation program, Canada's national standard for safe and inclusive workplaces for the 2SLGBTQI+ community, was launched in June 2021.

ABOUT CANADA'S 2SLGBTQI+ CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Canada's 2SLGBTQI+ Chamber of Commerce (CGLCC) links 2SLGBTQI+ businesses in Canada to the wider business and corporate community. It fosters economic growth by supporting and nurturing 2SLGBTQI+ businesses, entrepreneurs, students and allies, and by helping Canada's corporate world connect with the 2SLGBTQI+ business community. ■


 A photograph of two people riding e-bikes on a dirt trail in the Drumheller Valley. The landscape is characterized by layered, eroded rock formations in shades of brown and tan. The person on the left is wearing a dark top and shorts, while the person on the right is wearing a yellow shirt and dark shorts. They are both wearing helmets. The title 'Bikes and Bites' is overlaid in large white serif font.

Bikes and Bites

Exploring the Drumheller Valley by e-bike!

Riding in the badlands.
Credit: Katie Goldie / Travel Alberta.

In prehistoric times, the Drumheller Valley was home to *Albertosaurus sarcophagus* (“flesh-eating lizard from Alberta”). Today, you can trace their steps and become an *Albertosaurus lunchophagus* (“sandwich-eating cyclist”) when you rent an e-bike and grab a picnic lunch from Bikes and Bites – the best way to explore the Dinosaur Capital of the World!

Bikes and Bites is a unique destination experience that allows visitors to explore the Drumheller Valley by e-bike while stopping to enjoy its unique scenery with a delicious picnic lunch. It is a Travel Alberta featured activity!

You may be coming to the Drumheller Valley for the dinosaurs, but you will soon discover that it is so much more! Rent a bike and travel the community bike trails out to the Royal Tyrrell Museum, visit vast farmlands, take the Blieriot Ferry across the Red Deer River or stop at Horsethief Canyon and Orkney Viewpoint to take in the scenic vistas. Exploring the Badlands on bike will get you up close and personal to the unique physical features of the

Red Deer River Valley – you will feel transported back to prehistoric times!

This summer, Bikes and Bites introduced new tour packages to help visitors explore the community’s historical roots as a coal-mining town in the Boom Town Tour, visit a neighbouring ghost town on the Wayne Ride tour, or experience an outdoor yoga class and picnic in a local park on the Bikes & Bends tour.

While the biking season has generally been March to October, new winter bikes will be available later in the year, and the Drumheller Valley is just as spectacular in the winter months as it is in spring, summer and fall. Enjoy the bright yellow fall colours typical of Alberta – and don’t forget to pack your mitts and toque! Hoodies (or bunny hugs, if you are from Saskatchewan) are also a good option to bring along.

AND THE FOOD, YOU ASK?

A delicious selection of fresh sandwiches, charcuterie and deli boxes provide a tasty main for your picnic – especially when you

pair it with fresh veggies, hummus, salad or fruit sides. And don’t forget the cookies and snacks! Natalie has all kinds of vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free options available – just ask!

Inspired by a visit to Drumheller in 2020, Bikes and Bites opened in 2021 and is 2SLGBTQIA+-owned by Lana and Natalie. Lana is the travel and cycling enthusiast, and Natalie is the chef that brings her culinary expertise and years of food service to the company.

While Lana and Natalie are busy entrepreneurs, they also find time to give back to their community. Lana is quick to note, “Natalie does such a great job running the company that it gives her time to volunteer in the community!” As active members of the Badlands Pride Association, they support the planning and hosting of the week-long celebration held each June. They are also supporters of the local Rails to Trails legacy project designed to double the number of multi-purpose trails in Drumheller by converting former CN railbeds, including the addition of the iconic Midland Bridge.



Two men bike riding in the fall.

Lana also makes time to be involved with the local Chamber of Commerce and Travel Drumheller.

The duo recently unveiled their refreshed location in the Badlands Community Facility, which is also home to the Drumheller Public Library and Canalta Fitness Centre, and plays hosts to a variety of conferences, meetings and weddings. During the winter months, they also provide food services at the local arena – their friendly faces are recognized in the community year-round.

Long considered sacred ground by the Blackfoot and Cree peoples, the fossils found throughout the Drumheller Valley were thought to be a graveyard for giants. Much later, in 1884, Joseph Tyrrell was credited with the discovery of dinosaur fossils in the area. Today, the Drumheller Valley is known to have one of the world's richest natural deposits of prehistoric dinosaur fossils – a theme that is consistently displayed throughout this exciting small town in southern Alberta. ■

Aerial of badlands and river valley riding.
Credit: C Schatz Photography.

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Empowering the 2SLGBTQIA+ Community in Home Buying



Insights from Chelsy Pommer, realtor and advocate

By Bryan Hansen

In the dynamic and multifaceted realm of real estate, where property transactions often intersect with personal narratives, Chelsy Pommer stands out not just as a realtor, but as an advocate for positive change.

The 2SLGBTQIA+ community faces several hurdles when attempting to purchase homes in Canada. These challenges encompass various aspects, including discrimination and bias. According to a 2019 report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals encounter multiple forms of discrimination within the housing market, such as housing denial, higher rents or prices, eviction and homophobic or transphobic attitudes. This discriminatory landscape is even more pronounced for 2SLGBTQIA+ people of colour, Indigenous individuals, immigrants, refugees and those with disabilities, who often experience compounded discrimination due to intersecting identities.

Another significant obstacle is the lack of comprehensive legal protection. While the *Canadian Human Rights Act* prohibits housing discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity

and gender expression, this protection extends primarily to federally regulated sectors. Housing providers, who are primarily governed by provincial or territorial laws, may not offer the same level of protection, leaving 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals vulnerable in many instances. For example, only nine provinces and territories explicitly prohibit discrimination based on gender identity and expression, further exacerbating the issue.

As a licensed realtor with Amenity Real Estate Ltd. and a licensed mortgage professional with Shirl Funk Mortgages, Pommer weaves together a tapestry of expertise and passion. Beyond her professional designations, Pommer is a dedicated wife, mother of three and a proud supporter of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community – a cause that holds a special place in her heart to foster a more inclusive world.

Pommer's words resonate with sincerity and dedication as she delves into the challenges encountered by the 2SLGBTQIA+ community in their pursuit of home ownership. Her empathy is palpable, reflecting her deep-seeded commitment to understanding and

addressing the additional hurdles that 2SLGBTQIA+ community members often face due to their unique identities. "When I first saw the opportunity to discuss the challenges that the 2SLGBTQIA+ community faces when buying a home, I immediately felt a bit saddened that those in the community face additional challenges simply because of who they are. Yet, the reality is that they do," Pommer states.

Finding a place to call home is about more than just bricks and mortar; it's about finding a space where one can authentically be themselves and feel protected and reinforced. Inclusion, safety and access to 2SLGBTQIA+-friendly services are all concerns impacting 2SLGBTQIA+ home buyers and renters. Instances of violence, harassment and isolation from both neighbours and local authorities are not uncommon. Additionally, difficulties in accessing essential services such as health care, education, employment opportunities and social support networks further compound these challenges. Often, 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals seek areas with a higher concentration of 2SLGBTQIA+ residents, businesses and organizations,

usually located in urban centres with elevated housing costs.

Pommer's understanding is substantial as she acknowledges the heightened concerns that community members might grapple with when selecting a neighbourhood. Safety, comfort and a sense of belonging become paramount considerations. Pommer suggests that potential indicators of an inclusive neighbourhood might include the presence of Pride flags on display, or seeking out areas where friends and families also reside, ensuring a robust support system. "I can imagine that choosing a neighbourhood that you want to purchase a home in would bring some concerns – wanting to ensure that you feel safe, comfortable and supported. The truth is that a great realtor can really help with this process," she says.

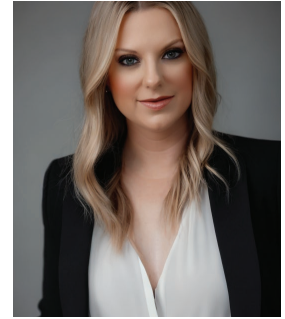
Pommer dives deeper into the pivotal role that a realtor plays in this aspect of the home-buying journey. She illustrates how a well-informed realtor can become a beacon of guidance, helping individuals uncover neighbourhoods where they can not only find their dream home, but also a nurturing community. Pommer's insights paint a vivid picture of a realtor who evolves into a partner and advocate – a guiding light in the complex journey of home buying. "Being open with prospective realtors about who you are should never be something that hinders the home-buying process, but rather complements it and ensures you end up right where you need to be," she says.

Pommer's philosophy is firmly rooted in transparent communication. She underscores the transformative power of open dialogues between realtors and clients. Pommer fervently believes that one's identity, preferences and dreams should seamlessly intertwine with the home-buying process, enhancing it rather than inhibiting it. She emphasizes the necessity for realtors to tailor their search to align with the unique aspirations of each individual, highlighting her commitment to creating a safe and affirming space for all.

"Unfortunately, we can't escape judgment or discrimination everywhere," she explains. However, one can take comfort in the fact that there is a strong presence of allyship within the real estate

“Being open with prospective realtors about who you are should never be something that hinders the home-buying process, but rather complements it and ensures you end up right where you need to be.”

- CHELSY POMMER



industry. "Knowing there is a strong network of accepting realtors ready to help you find your next home can certainly bring you comfort. You can count on me as one of those realtors."

In a world where universal acceptance remains an aspiration, Pommer emerges as a beacon of hope. Her dedication and compassion stand as a testament to a community of realtors poised to champion

the 2SLGBTQIA+ community in their quest for a home. Pommer's steadfast commitment echoes her values, promising a nurturing and supportive environment for 2SLGBTQIA+ community members to discover and secure their dream homes. "Having a realtor that is looking out for your best interests can help ease worries when researching the right place for you to buy," she concludes. ■

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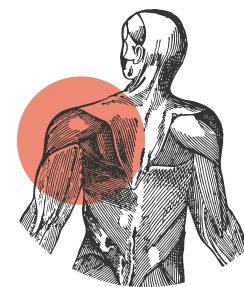
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TRADE ROUTES

Opportunities abound in the skilled trades for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community *By James Peters*

The trades tend to fall into the well-worn pigeonholes of welders, plumbers, electricians and carpenters, to name a few. But the trades represent a much broader category of occupations than some might initially think. For those in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, traditional trade occupations present viable career options, as do some of the lesser known.

“Careers in the skilled trades mean jobs in multiple industries, such as transportation, manufacturing and the service industry,” explains Colin Druhan, Executive Director of Pride at Work Canada. “And in the entertainment business – makeup artists and hair stylists, for example. The norm for most of these skilled trades is that workers first apprentice and then continue towards

a specific level of certification. Once complete, a certificate usually guarantees a specific level of income over the lifecycle of the job. So once you’re certified, that only increases your job security, which Pride at Work obviously encourages.”

As its website attests, Pride at Work Canada was created to help build workplaces that celebrate all employees, regardless of gender expression, gender identity or sexual orientation. “We help owners and managers improve their policies and programs to welcome more queer and trans people into the workplace,” Druhan adds. “We provide support in many ways by helping to create a more inclusive workplace culture. Pride at Work also promotes programs for queer and trans people for networking

and to improve their competencies in management positions.”

It’s no surprise that there are unique challenges for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community in trade work. “Much like the kind of wage gaps we see in the broader labour market, we see in gender wage equity. That unfairness exists in many areas and across multiple job clusters, much like everywhere else,” Druhan says. “For example, the different but similar jobs on a television program are often unfair – the lighting technician and the makeup artist both require a similar amount of training and both work for about the same amount of time, but makeup artists get paid much less than lighting techs. That doesn’t mean huge strides haven’t been made in those

Realistically, the trades are often unionized environments, and it's difficult to pull people from the jobsite to do a full day of training, so the operational challenges are in finding those moments to weave in some of those important lessons, instead of pulling people away. "I tell employers that no matter what kind of training you're teaching, make sure it's relevant to what the workers are doing on the job," Druhan says.

Druhan and his colleagues from Pride at Work enforce their message through meetings, speaking engagements and educational sessions, and they're always trying to target the people identified as change agents. "On request, we also do a lot of consulting and benchmarking after auditing the company's practices and policies related to inclusion," he says. "Then we'll make recommendations and suggest refinements where the outcomes can result in fewer harassment complaints and the establishment of a more diversified talent pool. We also talk directly to employees through employee resource groups who see us as allies. The

age-old formula persists – about 80 per cent of the positive outcomes are because of 20 per cent of the interventions."

TRADE FUTURES

Many of the more noticeable improvements to inclusion, just over the last few years, are in how companies think of future generations. Not long ago, the people represented in the trades weren't anywhere near as diverse, and there just wasn't much access for queer and trans people to join that workforce.

"Now we're seeing far more people representative of various genders and ethnicities going into the trades," Druhan concludes. "I've witnessed lots of companies making sure kids from a young age know the options that are open to them and helping them understand what their trajectories could look like. Clearly, we should be exposing our kids to a broader spectrum of choices at a younger age, so they can understand the opportunities that are open to them now." ■

industries, and in society in general, but there's still some work to do."

IN THE TOOLBOX

And where could employers do a better job of creating more opportunity for advancement and a more equitable environment the 2SLGBTQIA+ community? "One of the common ways is [by] not only enhancing communications, but understanding when and where to do so," Druhan explains. "Businesses everywhere want to get on with the task at hand, so there's not a lot of time to spend on anything less than the essentials. But many of the trades-dominated businesses have morning safety meetings, or 'toolbox talks,' if you will. I urge employers to leverage those moments by including discussions about things like mental health and the importance of developing a diverse workforce. It's about asking questions such as, 'How can we all be better listeners and promote people skills to improve interpersonal outcomes, rather than just focusing on the physical aspects of the job and safety practices?'"



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DEI BEYOND THE WALLS

Bridging the gaps for improved inclusion policies

By Luis Augusto Nobre, Senior Communications Coordinator, Pride at Work Canada/Fierté au travail Canada

We change our point of view from time to time as we acquire new experiences and knowledge. We are now living in a time when we must address 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion with a different approach and better systemic view. With the advancement of hate, hurtful speech and discriminatory legislation worldwide, it is fundamental to protect queer and trans communities in all spaces.

Many diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) professionals and advocates have

been focusing on creating safer spaces for people with intersecting identities. Still, those spaces become bubbles or islands, where people are only protected when temporarily inside. We also know that discriminatory practices can find pathways to enter environments in different capacities. To improve this current mindset, employers and DEI professionals need to work in collaboration with impacted communities to continue creating inclusive spaces and expand them beyond office walls.

2SLGBTQIA+ people might experience a fantastic workplace, with colleagues respecting them for who they are, inclusive policies and positive career advancements (although we know that this still isn't the reality for everyone). They could also have a safe and supportive home environment. However, many of us are terrified of the commute to get to the office, relying on public transportation or walking unsafe pathways. Securing those bridges that connect safe bubbles and islands should be part of any DEI plan.

Many colleagues and employers only focus on health and safety (H&S) practices in the workplace, when inclusive H&S strategies should be more holistic and consider the quality of the commute, mental health and the security level of running errands, buying groceries or leisure time during an employee's time off. Other considerable factors for H&S beyond office walls could include support for finding a safe school for employees' queer children, or one that won't create issues with queer parents. Research data shows 2SLGBTQIA+ people experience high stress levels when doing ordinary things as they are more exposed to our society and its potential violence and discrimination.

If we start rethinking those bubbles or islands and work to improve our protective systems, we will consequently help remove barriers that oppress queer and trans people. Over time, we could create a space where everyone is welcome to live as their authentic selves beyond their workplace or home. Our identities as professionals, clients, consumers and citizens always overlap – one person's workplace is someone else's leisure environment, and vice versa. This is why expanding inclusive spaces makes a

difference in our lives and protects queer and trans communities everywhere.

These beyond-the-wall approaches reinforce steps to eliminate performative strategies and rainbow washing. The collective alliance has to consider other sides of our lives when we aren't in the office. An excellent example to illustrate this topic happened in June 2022, when the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, changing reproductive legislation and allowing states to ban abortion outright. While several U.S. states have made abortion illegal, many companies have announced support for their employees by offering to cover travel costs for out-of-state abortion procedures.

Unfortunately, the same movement didn't happen when anti-trans and anti-2SLGBTQIA+ legislation emerged. DEI practices must be universal and consistent, not just for select groups or identities. Companies should have been more vocal in supporting their queer and trans employees, clients and communities while lobbying for their safety. The abortion support wasn't in the workplace but outside the organization's parameter. Why not extend the same caring hand to trans folks, for example?

Considering all of the above, there is no point in developing the best and

most inclusive workplace with benefits and strategies if the employer doesn't consider their employees' beyond-the-office life or keep consistent with their existing work environment. For example, many companies or leaders support anti-2SLGBTQIA+ politicians or controversial practices while massively advertising their inclusive policies. It shows how shallow and performative their DEI strategies are. This performative approach extends to inclusion in general, touching on Indigenous rights, gender issues, immigration and refugee support, racialized groups and more. It is weak, empty and has no intrinsic value.

What we as queer and trans community members need is a public commitment from employers, professionals, allies, family and others to ensure that they will protect us and our rights. We aren't asking much; we expect the same rights and respect as everyone else. We want to walk with no fear, being proud of who we are, the journey that we have had and the dreams that we will make come true. We want to experience the right to live a good and respected life regardless of what side of the wall we are on – if any barrier still exists. ■

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OVERCOMING BARRIERS

Federal government selects CGLCC to administer funds for Canada's first-ever 2SLGBTQI+ Entrepreneurship Program

By Amber Phalen, Manager, Marketing & Communications, CGLCC

The Honourable Mary Ng, Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, announced that the Government of Canada has selected Canada's 2SLGBTQI+ Chamber of Commerce (CGLCC) to administer Canada's first-ever 2SLGBTQI+ Entrepreneurship Program. The \$25-million investment will assist entrepreneurs who identify as 2SLGBTQI+ in overcoming the systemic barriers they face when starting and expanding their businesses.

The Minister made the announcement at CGLCC's Global 2SLGBTQI+ Business Summit & Supplier Diversity Forum. Joining the Minister was Darrell Schuurman, Co-founder and CEO of the CGLCC, and Sylvie Ouellette, President and Co-founder of Versatil, BPI Inc., a member of CGLCC's Supplier Diversity Program.

"Entrepreneurs who identify as 2SLGBTQI+ play a crucial role in contributing to the Canadian economy. Yet they continue to encounter systemic barriers when starting and expanding their businesses," said Schuurman. "Over the past two decades, the CGLCC has been a leading advocate for 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs. The new 2SLGBTQI+ Entrepreneurship Program marks a significant stride towards tackling these obstacles. We are honoured to assist the

Government of Canada in this important work."

Managed by CGLCC, the 2SLGBTQI+ Entrepreneurship Program comprises three primary programs: the Business Scale Up program, the Ecosystem Fund and the Knowledge Hub. Together, these programs provide invaluable resources such as business advice, networking opportunities and mentorship to assist 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs in launching, growing or expanding their businesses, both domestically and internationally. The initiative also builds a robust network of existing and new organizations dedicated to supporting these entrepreneurs, and generates essential data to enhance our understanding of 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs and the specific challenges they face.

The initiative makes a significant stride in supporting 2SLGBTQI+ businesses already struggling upstream while trying to maintain their own unique professional identity.

"The new 2SLGBTQI+ Entrepreneurship Program will be a game changer for companies like Versatil," said Ouellette. "For too long we've faced barriers and challenges in trying to grow our business, simply because of who we are. Through this program, CGLCC will be able to reach 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs and businesses across the country, coast to coast, working to tear down those barriers and ensure that those businesses have equal access

and opportunity. We're proud to be a certified LGBTQ business with CGLCC; this program will only help to build on the work they're doing to create an inclusive Canadian economy."

Over the past 20 years, CGLCC has successfully provided support to members of the 2SLGBTQI+ business community through a number of initiatives, including its Supplier Diversity program, OUT for Business youth mentorship program, global trade missions and its Rainbow Registered accreditation program.

More information will be made available in the upcoming months. Visit cglcc.ca/programs/2slgbtqi-entrepreneurship-program for additional details on this initiative, or visit canada.ca/en/innovation-science-economic-development/news/2023/06/minister-ng-announces-2slgbtqi-entrepreneurship-program.html to read the federal release.

ABOUT CANADA'S 2SLGBTQI+ CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Canada's 2SLGBTQI+ Chamber of Commerce (CGLCC) links 2SLGBTQI+ businesses in Canada to the wider business and corporate community. It fosters economic growth by supporting and nurturing 2SLGBTQI+ businesses, entrepreneurs, students and allies, and by helping Canada's corporate world connect with the 2SLGBTQI+ business community. ■



By André Morriseau

Past to the Future

I still remember shaking in terror under the slight weight of my long-past older brother's girlfriend Theresa, as a drunken young man blinded by hate screamed obscenities and physical threats at me. Under her fearless protection, this 17-year-old, unbeknownst-to-myself gay teenager was bearing witness to the face of hate and the frontline heat of violence just for existing. It was the mid-70s – my age of discovery, when the Vietnam War was winding down as the Eagles were building the world a “Hotel California” where freedom and expression reigned.

Sadly, the hotel is burning, and freedom is being trampled under ideological madness that is as threatening as the climate changing under our feet and in the skies above.

I am honoured to have a space where I can share my heartfelt concern regarding the recent rise in hate and violence against the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Being denigrated and made lesser is not the kind of world we would want for future humanity, when we are all dust in the winds of tomorrow.

When we are forced to walk the streets of intolerance, we live in a constant war zone of people isolated by their hate for each other, creating a lonely sense of oneness void of the love of community and understanding. I proudly don't live in a world of fear. From the AIDS epidemic where I lost so many friends to embracing my being different, I have learned – albeit carefully – to stand on the stage of life and loudly proclaim my right to unapologetically be who I am. Here,

in the pages of *QBiz*, I am finding a new voice where celebrating queer business accomplishments continues my journey of self expression.

From a business perspective, the ideological banter in search of the hate vote is quite frankly bad business. Businesses that celebrate the culture of inclusiveness are courageous and need to be applauded when they do more than just fly flags. They change human resources policies, benefits plans and much more to show that they are indeed living in the 21st century, not some outpost of past indifference. We can't allow the shrill of the few to slam shut the doors of progress.

Diversity is a massive word that has become an icon of contemporary life. It must not be weaponized and demonized to turn back the clock as companies and organizations, in fear of offending someone, strengthen the forces that would see peoples of difference once again forced to live in the shadows of fear.

As an officially newly minted elder, I still harbour a feeling of excitement and optimism about the world around me. I see the world in the eyes of my many nieces, nephews and the youth in my life. They see a current world unfolding in the beauty of music, movies, adventure and friends. That's the kind of world we must work so hard to leave them – void of barriers, hate and rules that never existed until they were created for the benefit of some at the expense of all.

I'm short, gay, balding French, Scottish and Ojibway; I am Canadian. I've been saying for years that I've lived a

life filled with a lot of name-calling and ducking and running, but not away from the essence of my journey. I've used my humour and art to build a better place for hopefully my family and everyone around me.

One of my dearest friends in the world left his home country to pursue his passion for being the open, beloved gay man that he is. It is people like him who fuel my love for the other and others. His challenge has been living between two worlds while trying to build a world for himself in between. His success is lived in freedom each and every day.

We all have a duty to make a difference by not allowing our darker side to envelop and lessen our empathy and kindness towards each other.

The bottom line today is that the memory of that 17-year-old, cowering in fear under the weight of someone committed to fight for the protection of others, burns in my memory like it was only yesterday. Life goes by quickly and can bring either baggage or strength along for the ride. I chose strength and thanks.

We must not allow intolerance to add to economic uncertainty and woe. 2SLGBTQIA+ businesses are proudly exercising their entrepreneurial excellence in towns and cities across the country. They deserve our support as neighbours and friends in a united community.

Together we don't have to go *past to the future* – we can peacefully live in the future we already fought so hard to achieve. ■

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Championing the 2SLGBTQ+ Community

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TD is proud to work with more than 175 2SLGBTQ+ initiatives dedicated to building a more inclusive tomorrow.

Members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community face a unique set of challenges when it comes to their financial needs. Business owners within the community experience limited access to funding, resources, and supportive business relationships stemming from systemic discrimination and social biases. To overcome these challenges, policies that promote diversity, inclusion, and allyship must be implemented.

That's why, at TD, we support 2SLGBTQ+ customers across Canada through a variety of inclusive policies, communications, development programs, and initiatives.

The Bank has a long history of supporting diversity and inclusion for both customers and employees. Our dedicated 2SLGBTQ+ Business Development Managers actively engage with the community on a regular basis, which is evident in the long-lasting relationships they have built over the years. Beyond the workplace, our Regional Managers support and volunteer with local grassroots organizations to form meaningful connections and a deeper understanding of the 2SLGBTQ+ community and their financial needs.

To address these specific needs, TD has taken several steps, including:

- **Fostering an inclusive environment** through policies, training programs, and diversity initiatives to promote acceptance and combat discrimination.
- **Providing education and training** on 2SLGBTQ+ communities, challenges, and inclusivity best practices to increase awareness and understanding within the organization.
- **Supporting 2SLGBTQ+ business networks** to provide mentorship, networking opportunities, and resources to help entrepreneurs foster professional growth and success.
- **Encouraging supplier diversity programs** that actively seek out and support 2SLGBTQ+-owned businesses and entrepreneurs to work with them and include them in procurement processes.

TD offers a team of 2SLGBTQ+ Business Development Managers across Canada that work together with colleagues in branches, Business Banking and Wealth to provide the services required, in an inclusive setting.

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